

EDAD 639 – Administrative Practicum
Chadron State College
Reflection #1
Kellen Conroy
October 30, 2014

Administrative Log: August – October 2014

Documented Learning Experiences:

1. PIP/ISLLC Self- Assessment Discussion – Dr. Bob Uhing, ESU #1
2. Co-facilitation of School Improvement Meeting – [REDACTED] Public Schools

Addressed ISLLC Standard:

Standard #1: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

Standard Indicators:

1. Identify the district's core values, meet with key leaders within the organization and ascertain how the system functions to mirror these core values.
2. Evaluate the extent to which school improvement goals are being accomplished.

PIP/ISLLC Self-Assessment Discussion
August 26, 2014

According to the Wallace Foundation (2013) study on principals as leaders, “effective principals are responsible for establishing a school-wide vision of commitment to high standards and the success of all students” (pg. 7). As a leader of a business organization or acting as an instructional leader in an educational setting, one must establish a clear and concise vision that sets the tone for and guides the members of the organization in a positive direction, which also strives to constantly improve practices. Having the opportunity to complete the ISLLC Self-Assessment and appropriately use the data/feedback to create a Personalized Internship Plan has provided me an

opportunity to set a clear vision for my internship experiences as I grow and develop into a more effective and meaningful educational leader. To build upon my experiences of completing the ISLLC Self-Assessment and creating my Personalized Internship Plan, I also had the opportunity to discuss my goals and vision with one of my internship mentors, Dr. Bob Uhing, Administrator at Educational Service Unit #1 (ESU #1). Dr. Uhing has been in administration for twenty-four years and is highly respected throughout our organization and across the state. Having the opportunity to work more closely with Dr. Uhing is a tremendous honor and a priceless learning experience.

One of the first topics that we discussed was in relation to the roles of each participant in the internship. From there, our conversation moved to the ISLLC Self-Assessment and the goals that had been established based off of the assessment data which are included in the PIP. I shared with Dr. Uhing the four goals that I had created to guide my internship experience and how those goals related to the completed assessments and data. The four goals that were created relate to human resources, collaboration, fiscal management/operation, and administrative responsibilities in relation to legislation and law. Establishing a clear vision of learning will help me better focus on the learning opportunities that are present throughout my internship experiences. According to Hackmann et. al (2002) “a vision is a picture of what the organization would look like if operating at its maximum potential in achieving its common goal” (pg. 38). Relating my experience to the previous statement, the successful completion of my four completed goals will exemplify what my internship and leadership experiences should look like when I have had the opportunity to experience related learning opportunities.

Throughout the conversation with Dr. Uhing in relation to my completed ISLLC Self-Assessment and Personalized Internship Plan (PIP) I was able to grasp onto several ideas and professional practices/approaches that would enable me to have a more successful and positive learning experience. The effective communication style that Dr. Uhing uses is a tremendous example of educational leadership and sharing a vision with others. “Good communicators speak with clarity and conviction, show passion and enthusiasm for their message, take the time to be appropriately prepared, and are honest and consistent with their public” (Hackmann, et.al., 2002, pg. 47). Effective leaders must be effective communicators. Having the opportunity to focus on communication with Dr. Uhing in relation to my goals and articulating those goals with others was a great learning opportunity and one to practice in both my personal and professional life.

A second professional practice and/or approach that was discussed throughout our conversation was in relation to approaching other practicing administrators throughout our districts. I shared some examples of ideas in which I was thinking about and Dr. Uhing clearly and effectively communicated from a learner’s point of view and not a “you should do it this way” approach. I very much appreciated that aspect of our conversation due to the fact that not only was Dr. Uhing providing me advice related to my ideas/thoughts he was also modeling the necessary professional methods of communication. After I thought about what was said and at time more importantly how it was said, I can take the modeled communication idea and advice and implement those into my future learning opportunities.

After the conclusion of the conversation with Dr. Uhing I had time to reflect upon the ISLLC Self-Assessment, the completed PIP, and the contents of the actual discussion. The more I think and reflect upon the components of the conversation and my style of leadership, I have come to figure out that I have a great deal to learn about the world of educational administration. As a devoted life-long learner and one that strives to maintain a growth mindset, having many things to learn and continuing to grow and develop, as an educational leader is an ok problem to have. When one thinks that they have learned all they need to know, doesn't adapt with change in the educational environment, and ceases to professionally challenge oneself that individual is in serious danger of harming not only themselves, but the students, staff, and community in which they serve. I understand the components of educational leadership in which I must strive to improve upon and professional grow in order to be a more effective leader. The priceless conversation with Dr. Uhing was just one of many that will take place throughout the internship experience and my time at ESU #1. I'm looking forward to continual professional growth, challenges that promote growth, and using newly acquired skills and knowledge to better serve others.

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Co-facilitation of School Improvement Meeting
September 22, 2014

The school improvement process is a critical piece of a school's puzzle in the age of high stakes testing, accountability, and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Administrators, teachers, educational staff, and stakeholders must effectively collaborate in order to maintain continuous improvement in the school. Whether a school is AdvancED or Nebraska Frameworks accredited, the leadership of the school must ensure that the school is constantly working to improve the educational environment through effective communication practices, data analysis, and initiative support. Through the development of a leadership or steering committee, school leaders can gain a better pulse on where the school is at, communicate where the school wants to be, and determine how to get there.

I had the opportunity to co-facilitate a school improvement meeting in which a steering committee had been established and the focus of analyzing the school improvement process was the central focus. Co-facilitating this meeting was a great learning opportunity for me because I had the opportunity to work more closely with one of our school districts and provide insight as to items the district team to think about, possible committee strategies, and how I can support the district more effectively in my role as a staff developer.

After taking the time to reflect upon my experience with the school district and their steering committee meeting, I found that I had learned more about the importance of communication. Communication is a two-way street. In order to be an effective communicator, being a good listener is just as important as being a good speaker. Throughout the meeting I had to remember that this is the school's process and not mine.

The school and steering committee needs to own the process and in order to do that, I had to be an active listener and only offer input when appropriate to do so. In addition to the communication skills needed to be an effective facilitator, I also learned more about personal dynamics of individual team members and how that can have a positive/negative impact on a team and/or committee. Selecting members for a steering committee or district leadership team is an important responsibility of educational leaders. It is important to not only communicate with possible team members, but to state the purpose of the team as well. In addition, when selecting and organizing a team, one needs to select representatives from a variety of educational positions throughout the district and even possibly the community. Having people with the same perspective will not promote and foster a culture of improvement. The team needs people with differing perspectives that are willing to collaborate and work together to guarantee that continuous improvement of a school is taking place. The work with the district is not complete and school improvement is never truly completed work. Taking what I have learned from this first meeting, I must apply my knowledge to future meetings not only in this district, but also in other districts that I am fortunate to work with.

In terms of educational leadership and my own style of leadership, how would I have acted as an educational leader in this example? As an educational leader it is important for me to be an effective communicator with team members and foster a culture of excellence based upon common educational goals. Hoyle et.al. (1998) state, “visionary leaders who strive for excellence develop team loyalty around ideas and shared values” (pg. 2). The school improvement team must be visionary leaders that strive to ensure the school is constantly working towards excellence in teaching and

learning. In addition, school improvement is a critical process in which schools must set as a top priority to ensure that the highest possible quality of teaching and learning is achieved. Setting school improvement initiatives, work, and meetings as top priorities in the school directly relates to the level of expectations set and the establishment of a culture dedicated to continuous improvement.

I look forward to continued opportunities facilitating and participating in future school improvement meetings with districts across our educational service unit (ESU). Supporting schools in their efforts to continuously improve is a difficult yet very rewarding component of my service to schools.

References:

- Hackmann, D.G., Schmitt-Oliver, D.M., & Tracy, J.C. (2002). *The standards-based administrative internship*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- The Wallace Foundation. (2013). *The school principal as leader: Guiding schools to better teaching and learning*.
- Hoyle, J.R. English, F.W., & Steffy, B.E. (1998). *Skills for successful 21st century school leaders: Standards for peak performers*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.